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The Netherlands recognizes the United States

"The most friendly and beneficial connexion"

April 19, 1782

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AMERICA VERTRAPT HET WORDENDE ALBION,
TERWIJL DER BRITTEN KROON VERPLET WORDT DOOR BOURBON;
EN ZIET DOOR NEERLAND ZICH, OP 'T SPOOR DER AMSTELLAAREN,
NAAM 'T VOORDEELIGE PLAN, IN ADAMS VRIJ VERKLAAREN.

S1.2:

Tractaat

van Vriendschap en Commercie tusschen Haar Hoog Mogende, de Staten Generaal der Vereenigde Nederlanden, en de Vereenigde Staten van America, te weten New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, en Providence Plantations, Connecticutt, New-York, New-Jersey, Pensylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Noord Carolina, Zuijd-Carolina en Georgia.

Haar Hoog Mogende de Staten Generaal der Vereenigde Nederlanden, en de Vereenigde Staten van America, te weten New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island en Providence Plantations, Connecticutt, New-York, New-Jersey, Pensylvanien, Delaware, Maryland, Virginien, Noord-Carolina, Zuijd-Carolina en Georgien, genegen zijnde, op een bestendige en billijke wijze te bepalen de regelen, die in acht genomen moeten worden, ten opzigte van de Correspondentie en Commercie welke zij verlangen met te stellen tusschen haare respective landen, Staten, Onderdanen en Ingezetenen, hebben geoordeelt, dat het gezegde einde niet beter kan worden bereikt, dan door te stellen tot een basis van haare Verdrag, de volmaakste egaliteit en

A Treaty

of Amity and Commerce between Their High Mightinesses the States General of the United Netherlands, and the United States of America, to wit New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations Connecticutt, New York, New Jersey, Pensylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Their High Mightinesses the States General of the United Netherlands, and the United States of America, to wit New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticutt, New York, New Jersey, Pensylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North-Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, desiring to ascertain, in a permanent and equitable manner, the Rules to be observed, relative to the Commerce and Correspondence, which They intend to establish, between their respective States, Countries and Inhabitants, have judged, that the said End cannot be better obtained, than by establishing the most perfect Equality and Reciprocity, for the Basis of their

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of Public Affairs

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John Adams (1735–1826), born in Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts, was educated at Harvard University and elected a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774. A signer of the Declaration of Independence, Adams served as a commissioner to France 1777–1779, before being appointed as Minister to the Netherlands in January 1781. He was received by the Dutch Government on April 19, 1782. Later that year he secured loans in the Netherlands and negotiated a treaty of amity and commerce. He then joined other American diplomats in Paris to negotiate the treaty of peace with Great Britain. He served as Vice President under George Washington, 1789–1797, and as the second President of the United States, 1797–1801. (Courtesy Harvard University Portrait Collection, Bequest-Ward Nicholas Boylston, 1828)

Establishment of diplomatic relations between the United Provinces of the Netherlands and the United States on April 19, 1782, marked a significant event in the history of the two nations.[1] Linked with America by common traditions of intellectual and political freedom, as well as by financial, commercial, and cultural ties, the Netherlands was the second country—after France—to recognize the Thirteen Colonies as an independent and sovereign nation.

From the beginning of the War for Independence, the American revolutionaries found sympathy among the Dutch, who had won their own independence from Spain two centuries before and who shared the Americans' views on the importance of seapower, free trade, and neutral rights on the high seas. But widespread British influence in the United Provinces and fear of British retaliation against Dutch shipping delayed concrete demonstrations of support for the Colonies until the tide of battle turned in favor of the rebels. While American diplomat John Adams' initial months in the Netherlands were full of perplexity over the workings of Dutch political institutions and frustration at the procrastination of the government and financiers, in the end he saw the establishment of official relations and the conclusion of a treaty of amity and commerce between the two republics on October 8, 1782, as "the greatest action of my life."[2]

It was clearly more than a personal triumph. As one historian has observed, the two countries dealt with one another as equals, and the Dutch actions "established the value of the United States in the eyes of the world, thereby marking a step forward in the independent national life of the new commonwealth."[3] A year later—October 31, 1783—the first Dutch Minister to the United States, Pieter Johan van Berckel, presented his credentials to the Continental Congress.

The International Setting

An already flourishing Dutch trade with the Colonies increased after the American Revolution erupted in the spring of 1775. Much of this trade was carried on at the Dutch island of Sint Eustatius in the Caribbean, where American merchants exchanged their products for gunpowder, iron, and other goods. Much to the annoyance of the British, the Dutch soon became a most important supplier of munitions to the American insurgents.

To gain European support for the war against Great Britain, the Continental Congress in November 1775 instructed the Committee of Secret Correspondence to write to certain agents in England and France to ascertain the attitudes of the major powers toward the rebellion. On behalf of the committee, Benjamin Franklin asked an old friend, Charles Guillaume Frédéric Dumas, to act as the American agent in the Dutch Republic. A man of letters and a capable linguist, Dumas was a naturalized Dutch citizen of Swiss origin who had long been fascinated by life in colonial America and who was an early supporter of the Colonies' rebellion. Franklin also made an urgent request for arms and ammunition. Dumas willingly accepted the offer, and his enthusiasm and incessant efforts on behalf of the American cause contributed significantly to the success of John Adams' mission to the Netherlands a few years later.

France, England's archenemy, was the first power to respond to the appeals of the American rebels. A few months after the Colonies proclaimed independence in July 1776, Congress sent a commission to France, headed by Franklin, to obtain funds and munitions. At Versailles on February 6, 1778, France signed treaties of alliance and friendship with the United States, thereby becoming the first country to recognize the Thirteen Colonies as an independent nation.

French recognition created a difficult foreign policy problem for the Dutch Republic. On the one hand, it was tied to

Britain by two treaties—a commercial treaty of 1674 and an alliance of 1678; moreover, its weak army and unprotected borders made it vulnerable to invasion by the French. On the other hand, an alliance with France would expose Dutch shipping—the major source of wealth—to attack and destruction by the powerful British Navy. In addition, many of the Dutch feared a possible reconciliation between England and the United States or recognition by England of American independence in exchange for a monopoly on the American trade.

The preservation of its existing trade became increasingly important because, in contrast to its great commercial prosperity of the previous century, the Dutch economy had declined in the 1700s. Moreover, the Netherlands was losing its traditional position as a staples market of Europe. While the Netherlands was still a major factor in commercial shipping from the Baltic to the Caribbean, many of the Dutch knew that their vulnerability to British seapower meant that neutrality, which allowed them to profit from trade with France and other belligerents, was the best guarantee of their independence and commerce.

Even though part of the Dutch people favored neutrality, this issue divided the major domestic political factions. The Orangists—the party of the Stadholder, Prince Willem V of Orange—traditionally favored close ties with England. The pro-French Patriots, by contrast, held republican views and sympathized with the United States on philosophical grounds. In France and Russia, they saw a counterbalance to the pervasive English influence in the economic and political life of the United Provinces. Another group, the merchants of the principal seaports, supported trade with France and America, and while they did not agree with the political philosophy of the Patriots, they joined them in their strategy of obstructing the Stadholder. This power struggle between the chief of state and the municipalities, dominated by the wealthy bourgeoisie, continued throughout 1779 and 1780.

The reaction to the arrival of the American Navy Captain John Paul Jones in Dutch waters with captured British ships on October 4, 1779, underscored the complexity of the Dutch situation. While the people of Amsterdam gave Jones an enthusiastic reception, the English Ambassador, Sir Joseph Yorke, strongly urged the Stadholder to take firm action against Jones. However, the States General, not the Stadholder, had sovereign powers in foreign affairs, and this body was in no hurry to decide the question. Finally, after 3 months of maneuvering by British and French diplomats in the Netherlands, the States General required Jones to leave.

The question of neutral rights concerned Russia as well as the Netherlands. In February 1780, Catherine II of Russia proclaimed a code of maritime principles for the protection of neutrals and asked other sovereigns to join her in the League of Armed Neutrality. Many nations responded; even the rebellious Colonies were interested. On October 5 Congress adopted a resolution stating its support for the league and its desire to join if invited. On December 10 the Dutch Republic announced it would accede to the league; less than two weeks later it found itself unexpectedly and involuntarily at war with Great Britain.

War Between the Netherlands and Great Britain

Great Britain declared war on the Netherlands on December 21, 1780, after accusing the Dutch of negotiating a secret treaty with the American rebels. Since 1776 American agents and Dutch bankers had been holding talks in Amsterdam about the possibility of negotiating a loan for the United States. Lack of official relations and uncertainty in the Netherlands about American credit were major obstacles in these negotiations. But in September 1778, William Lee, the representative of the Continental Congress to the Courts of Berlin and

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Vienna, and Jean de Neufville, a prominent Amsterdam merchant and banker, secretly drew up a draft treaty of amity and commerce between the United Provinces and the Thirteen States of North America without authorization from either of their governments. It was modeled on the Franco-American treaty of 1778 and strongly supported by Engelbert François van Berckel, one of its initiators, who was Amsterdam's Pensionary and one of its most powerful magistrates. The draft accord demonstrated the desire of the Amsterdam magistrates to restrain Congress from making agreements disadvantageous to the Netherlands and to provide American leaders with proof of their pro-American sentiments.

In October 1779, after receiving a copy of this draft treaty from Lee, Congress commissioned Henry Laurens of South Carolina to obtain a loan of $10 million in the Netherlands and to negotiate a treaty of amity and commerce. Because Laurens' departure was considerably delayed, Congress also sent a letter in June 1780 to John Adams—one of the commissioners in Paris—empowering him, pending Laurens' arrival, to act in his stead. In August 1780 Laurens set sail from Philadelphia, but a British frigate seized his ship off the coast of Newfoundland. Before the British stormed the ship, Laurens tossed overboard the bag containing his letters of credence to the States General and the copy of the draft secret treaty. But the iron shot attached to the bag was insufficient to sink it, and the British easily fished it out of the sea.

When the copy of the draft treaty reached London, the British Government imprisoned Laurens in the Tower of London. Aware that the Dutch were prepared to join the League of Armed Neutrality, the British Government denounced the Anglo-Dutch alliance. Rather than have the Dutch Republic join the league and make its ships and goods available to France and Spain, the British preferred a war that would give them freedom to capture Dutch ships and end Dutch contraband trade with America. British attacks on Dutch shipping began immediately, and an English squadron captured Sint Eustatius and other Dutch possessions in the Caribbean.

Adams' Mission in the Netherlands

While the battle over Dutch neutrality was being waged in the summer of 1780, John Adams arrived in the Netherlands. He reached Rotterdam on August 4 with his two sons, 13-year old John Quincy and 10-year old Charles, and, after proceeding through Delft, The Hague, and Leyden, arrived in Amsterdam on August 10. Disagreeing with French Foreign Minister Vergennes and Franklin, whom he considered too subservient to the French, Adams thought he was wasting his time in Paris. On his own initiative, even before receiving Congress' instructions, Adams had decided to go to the Netherlands to seek recognition and money for his government. His purpose was "to see if something might not be done there, to render my country somewhat less dependent of France, both for political consideration, for loans of money and supplies for our army."[4] He resided at Amsterdam because he felt it would be easier to secure loans there and he would not be under the thumb of the Duc de la Vauguyon, French Ambassador at The Hague.

This round-faced and outspoken New England lawyer found the Dutch people hospitable and friendly. The thriving city of Amsterdam, full of foreigners, merchants, and diplomatic agents, excited him and he easily made many new friends. Soon after arriving he praised the country in a letter to his wife, Abigail:

I have been here three weeks, and have spent my time very agreeably here. I am very much pleased with Holland. It is a singular Country. It is like no other. It is all the Effect of Industry and the Work of Art. The Frugality, Industry, Cleanliness

etc. here, deserve the Imitation of my Countrymen. The Fruit of these Virtues has been immense Wealth and great Prosperity. They are not Ambitious, and therefore happy. They are very sociable, however, in their peculiar Fashion.[5]

Adams immediately set out to learn Dutch, to study the country's history, and to understand its people, government, and international situation. For Adams, comprehending the complicated Dutch political system was difficult:

The sovereignty resides in the States-general; but who are the States-general? Not their High Mightinesses who assemble at the Hague to deliberate; these are only deputies of the States-general. The States-general are the regencies of the cities and the bodies of nobles in the several Provinces. The burgomasters of Amsterdam, therefore, who are called the regency, are one integral branch of the sovereignty of the United Provinces, and the most material branch of all, because the city of Amsterdam is one quarter of the whole republic, at least in taxes.[6]

A month after his arrival, Adams received a provisional commission from Congress to negotiate a loan. His initial expectation was that support would be easily obtained, but he soon discovered that the merchants and bankers of the United Provinces did not want to risk their funds without assurance of repayment and that they wanted commercial advantage as much as the United States wanted credit.

To the Dutch capitalists, the prospect of an American triumph looked slim in 1780 in view of British victories at Charleston in May and at Camden, South Carolina, in August. The longer Adams stayed in Holland, the more he realized how difficult it would be to persuade the Dutch to take any concrete action. By the end of 1780, although discouraged by his lack of success in obtaining a loan, he had not given up hope. In a letter to the President of Congress, he wrote:

Patience, firmness, and perseverance are our only remedy; these are a sure and infallible one; and, with this observation, I beg permission to take my leave of Congress for the Year 1780, which has been to me the most anxious and mortifying year of my whole life.[7]

Because of Laurens' capture by the British, Congress on January 1, 1781, appointed Adams as Minister Plenipotentiary to the Government of the Netherlands.

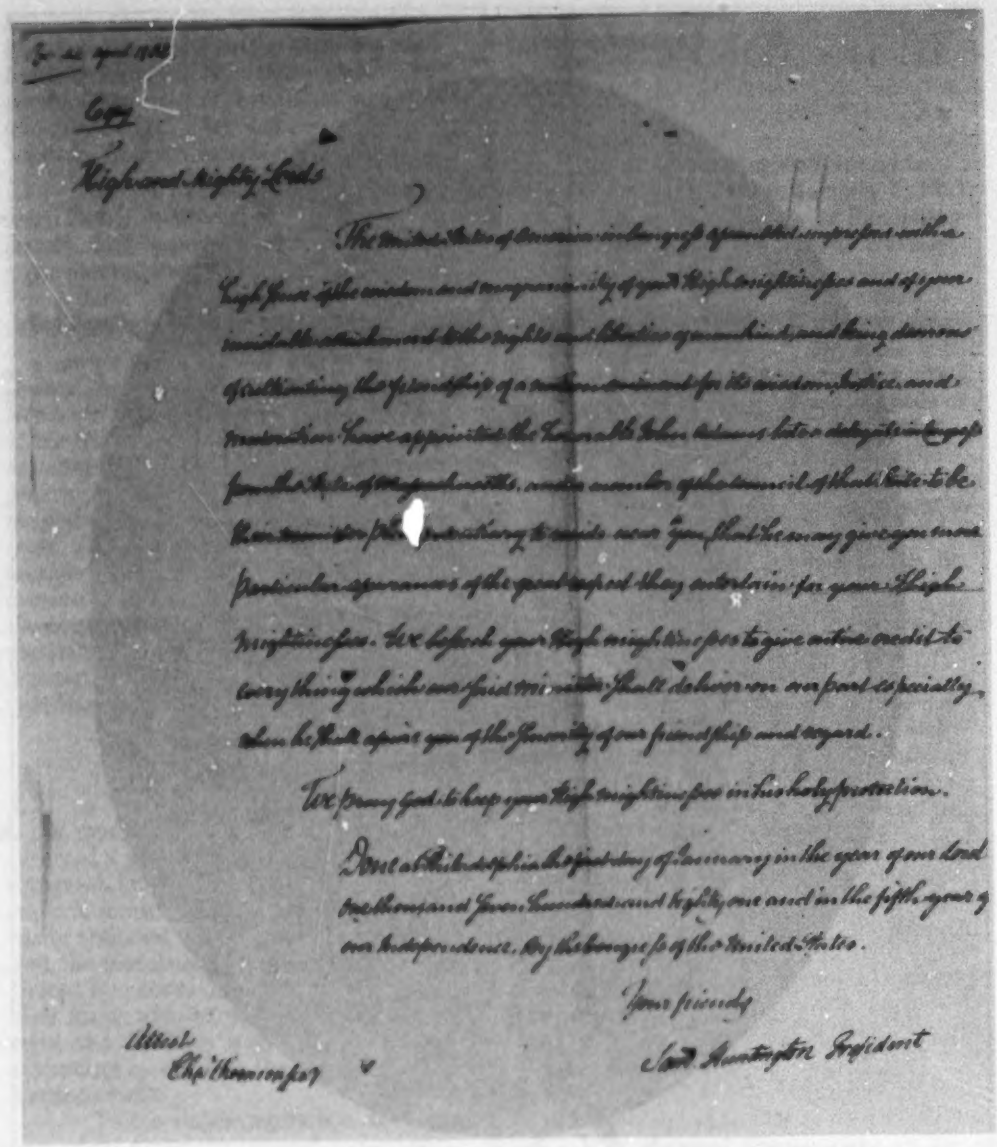
Adams realized that in order to obtain loans from the United Provinces, he would have to educate its people about his country. Even in the large port cities, he found pessimism about the chances of the rebellion succeeding, suspicion that the United States would fall under the control of France and Spain, and unfamiliarity with either the government or resources of the United States. In writing to the President of Congress, he said:

This country has been grossly deceived. It has little knowledge of the numbers, wealth, and resources of the United States, and less faith in their finally supporting their independence, upon which alone a credit depends. They have also an opinion of the power of England vastly higher than the truth. Measures must be taken, but with great caution and delicacy, to undeceive them.[8]

Adams' Supporters in the Netherlands

Adams demonstrated his exceptional talents as an advocate for the United States. He read, talked, questioned, persuaded, and skillfully argued with those he met and seemed instinctively to know what would appeal to Dutch readers. With the assistance of friends and collaborators, he flooded the United Provinces with sermons, articles, and letters from America. Dumas, who put Adams in touch with writers and publishers in the Patriot party, translated

Prince Willem V (1748–1806), served as Stadholder of the United Provinces of the Netherlands from 1751–1795. The later years of his rule saw the Netherlands weakened by its participation in European conflicts in 1780 and again in 1792–1793.and by internal factional strife. He was overthrown in 1795 and fled to England. (Private Collection of J.W. Schulte Nordholt)



To the great [illegible]

[illegible]

High and Mighty Lords

The United States of America, having [illegible] me with a high sense of the wisdom and magnanimity of your High and Mightinesses and of your inviolable attachment to the rights and liberties of your kind, and being desirous of cultivating the friendship of a nation so renowned for its wisdom, justice, and moderation, have appointed the Honorable John Adams, late a delegate in Congress from the State of Massachusetts, and one of the Council of that State, to be their Minister plenipotentiary to reside near you, that he may give you more particular assurances of the great respect they entertain for your High and Mightinesses. I ask leave, your High and Mightinesses, to give entire credit to every thing which our first Minister shall deliver on our part, especially, when he shall assure you of the sincerity of our friendship and regard.

I pray God to keep your High and Mightinesses in his holy protection.

Done at Philadelphia the first day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty one and in the fifth year of our Independence. By the Congress of the United States.

Your friends

Sam. Huntington President

Attest

Chas. Thomson Secy

Copy of John Adams' letter of credence, which he presented to the States General on April 20, 1782, and to Prince Willem V two days later. (Courtesy of the Algemeen Rijksarchief, The Hague)

and edited any material Adam wanted to circulate.

Through Dumas, Adams met Johan Luzac, a Patriot, lawyer, and classical scholar of Leyden who became a close personal friend. Luzac was editor of the *Nouvelles extraordinaires de divers endroits* published in Leyden and known throughout Europe as the *Gazette de Leyde*. Extremely interested in the goals and policies of the Thirteen Colonies and wanting to publish factual accounts, not propaganda or rumors, Luzac printed the reports provided by Adams of meetings of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston. Later he printed, in installments, the new Massachusetts constitution which Adams himself had drafted.

Another important friend was Antoine Marie Cerisier, a Frenchman, classical scholar, and authority on Dutch history and government who published the journal *Le politique hollandais* of Amsterdam. Since this publication was an organ of French propaganda, he eagerly followed many of Adams' suggestions and printed material favorable to America. Adams was especially pleased when Cerisier printed and distributed in large numbers translations of accounts by the defeated British Generals Burgoyne and Howe. While the authors attempted to excuse their military failures, they also unwittingly demonstrated the desperate state of the British cause in America.

Adams also met the prominent Amsterdam jurist, Hendrik Calkoen, who bombarded him with questions about America. Adams suggested they be put in writing and systematically answered. The 26 short essays Adams wrote as replies were used by Calkoen to compare the 16th century revolt of the Low Countries against Spain with the American rebellion against Great Britain. He concluded that the success of the former was a miracle and that it would be a greater miracle if the latter did not succeed. Calkoen read a paper containing these conclusions to a literary society in Amsterdam and thereby spread some of Adams' ideas as well as his own.

Other close friends of Adams included Johan Derk van der Capellen, a nobleman who had been the first in the Netherlands to espouse the American cause. As early as 1775, Van der Capellen declared that the Americans deserved esteem "as brave folk who in a calm, courageous and Godfearing manner are defending the rights granted to them as human beings, not by the Legislature in England, but by God himself."[9] He gave Adams useful advice and support, as did the Mennonite preacher from Leyden, Francois Adrian van der Kemp, who demonstrated his faith in America through preaching and publication of American documents. Van der Kemp, who eventually settled in the United States, wrote enthusiastically:

In America the sun of salvation has risen which shall also shine upon us if we wish: only America can revive our Commerce, our Navigation: . . . America can teach us how to fight the degeneration of the people's character, to stay moral corruption, to put an end to bribery, to smother the seeds of tyranny and to restore the health of our moribund freedom. America has been ordained by the Being of all beings to be the Netherlands' last preacher of penitence; America has been ordained to heal the flaws in the character of the Netherlands people, if they wish to follow in its footsteps.[10]

A Time of Difficulty for Adams

In the early months of his mission in the Netherlands, Adams encountered a clear unwillingness to lend financial assistance to the Colonies. Consequently he was heartened by increased signs of support for his countrymen that began appearing early in 1781. Addresses supporting the Colonies were presented in

the theaters, and popular songs were sung in the streets of Amsterdam. Adams also saw hope in the new wave of anti-British feeling in Haarlem, Leyden, The Hague, Delft, and Rotterdam following England's declaration of war against the Netherlands. These signs encouraged him to make himself and his mission known formally to the Dutch Government.

After receiving his credentials, along with instructions to conclude a treaty if possible with the States General, Adams consulted with his most influential and knowledgeable Dutch friends and decided not to present his credentials. At Adams' request, Dumas instead submitted a memorial to the States General on March 10 informing them of Congress' support of the League of Armed Neutrality. They were asked to discuss the issue among themselves and with the other neutral powers. Nothing came of the memorial; the States General received it, but took no action. Officials in Amsterdam, Dordrecht, and Haarlem told Dumas they were happy to see the memorial but regretted they could not reply.

At the end of March, Adams began to compose a second memorial to the States General. In this document, written in Leyden and completed April 19, Adams outlined America's claim to recognition by the Dutch Republic and his own claim to reception as minister. He explained how the American rebellion began and reviewed the wrongs of the English who had deprived the colonists of "the rights and liberties of Englishmen" and who had left them no alternative but to rise in rebellion and to assume "an equal station among the nations." The British fleets and armies, Adams said, had failed to alter America's determination to be free. He declared that "a natural alliance" existed between the two republics. The first inhabitants of New York and New Jersey, Adams recalled, were Dutch emigrants who "transmitted their religion, language, customs, manners, and character":

The originals of the two republics are so much alike, that the history of one seems but a transcript from that of the other; so that every Dutchman instructed in the subject must pronounce the American Revolution just and necessary, or pass a censure upon the greatest actions of his immortal ancestors; actions which have been approved and applauded by mankind and justified by the decision of Heaven.

Adams argued that once the British monopoly was broken, the United States and the Netherlands could benefit from an alliance which facilitated trade between Holland—rich in ships, traders, and funds—and America—overflowing with products and raw materials. Adams concluded that it was the desire of the United States "to form equitable commercial treaties with all the maritime powers of Europe, without being governed or monopolized by any." He observed that "if such benevolent policy should be adopted, the New World will be a proportional blessing to every part of the Old."[11]

Adams journeyed to The Hague at the beginning of May to transmit the memorial to the States General. La Vauguyon, the French Ambassador, tried but failed to dissuade Adams from delivering it. On May 4 Adams presented the memorial to Pieter van Bleiswyk, Grand Pensionary of Holland, who replied that he could not receive it but advised Adams to see the current President of the States General, the Baron van Lynden van Hemmen. Adams went immediately to see the President to explain his mission. The President replied that he could not receive Adams' credentials or the memorial because the United States was not yet acknowledged as a sovereign state by the Netherlands. He did agree to report their conversation to his colleagues and said that he thought the matter of great importance to the Netherlands. The same day Adams called on the Baron de Larrey, secretary to Prince Willem V, and presented the memorial and his diplomatic credentials. A few hours later, the secretary told Adams that the Prince sent his compliments but wished to return the documents, since he could not receive any letters from Adams because his nation was not yet recognized.

Despite the official rejection, Adams knew he must keep the issue of recognition alive. With the help of Luzac and Dumas, he had the memorial translated into French and Dutch and distributed to every political official in the provinces—some 4,000–5,000 persons. The appeal was also published by newspapers in the Netherlands and later throughout Europe.

Adams realized his only alternative was to wait. Heavy losses to the British at sea, the paralysis of Dutch commerce, and military weakness divided the Dutch Republic in the spring and summer of 1781 and meant that the time for recognition had not yet come. At the end of August, Adams became very ill and despondent. He was discouraged by his lack of success; depressed by Dutch indecision, procrastination, and ambivalence; and lonely for his family. His wife was still in America and his sons had left Amsterdam. John Adams suffered for 2 months with what he termed a nervous fever.

The Tide Turns

Both Adams' health and America's chances of winning the war improved in October 1781. The French-American victory over Cornwallis' army at Yorktown on October 19 turned the tide of battle and simplified Adams' tasks. Although it was 6 weeks before word of the victory reached Europe, it was decisive because it was understood everywhere that England could not replace its 8,000 surrendered soldiers. American independence now seemed assured. Moreover, at the end of November, Adams received new instructions from Congress to conclude, if possible, an alliance with the Dutch Government, preferably as part of a triple alliance with France. The precondition for this alliance was Dutch recognition of American independence. Pleased by his new instructions, he reported them to La Vauguyon, who advised Adams to begin negotiations with the Netherlands.

Adams resumed the diplomatic initiative and journeyed to The Hague early in the new year. On January 9, 1782, he asked the President of the States General for a "categorical answer" to his memorial of the preceding May. The President said he would report this new request to the States General for transmission to the members for their deliberation and decision. Adams also spoke to delegations from the principal cities of the Province of Holland who were headquartered in The Hague. The Hollanders, who favored close ties with America, received him warmly.

The campaign of the American diplomat and his Dutch friends began to bear fruit in February and March of 1782. In many cities, petitions were presented to the magistrates urging them to receive Adams as minister. Adams' supporters—Van der Capellen, Luzac, and Calkoen—gave spirit to this movement and composed numerous pamphlets. On February 26, the assembly of the northern Province of Friesland, whose shipping had suffered terrible losses at the hands of the British, voted to instruct its deputies in the States General to move formally for the reception of Adams as the American Minister. The assembly of the Province of Holland voted similarly on March 28, and during the first weeks of April one province after another followed suit.

Recognition of the United States

On April 19, 1782, a year after Adams had signed his first appeal to the States General and on the seventh anni-

versary of the battles of Lexington and Concord, he achieved the long-sought goal. The States General of the United Provinces resolved to admit and acknowledge Adams "in quality of envoy of the United States of North America."[12] The Netherlands had at last recognized the United States. The next day, April 20, Adams went to the States General to present his credentials.

On April 22, Prince Willem V granted the American envoy an audience to present his credentials. In describing his reception at the Prince's palace, Huys ten Bosch, on the outskirts of The Hague, Adams noted that they spoke in English:

I told him that I was happy to have the honor of presenting the respects of the United States of America, and a letter of credence from them to his Most Serene Highness, and to assure him of the profound veneration in which the House of Orange had been held in America, even from its first settlement, and that I should be happier still to be the instrument of further cementing the new connexions between the two nations professing the same religion, animated by the same spirit of liberty, and having reciprocal interests, both political and commercial, so extensive and important. . . .

The Prince read the credentials and accepted them and asked Adams several polite questions about his stay in the Netherlands, to which Adams graciously replied.[13]

Adams had reason to be pleased with his achievement. By applying at the earliest possible moment for recognition and then pressing for an answer from the States General, he had not only drawn attention to his own mission but also had helped to rally the anti-British faction in the Netherlands with his dramatic appeal for Dutch-American friendship. As the Spanish Minister at The Hague remarked to Adams:

You Sir, have struck the greatest blow in all Europe. It is the best blow that has ever been struck in the American cause. It will be a fright and terror to the Anglomanes. It will kindle the enthusiasm of this nation. It is you who have turned their heads in the right direction.[14]

Dutch recognition of the United States thrust Adams into public prominence. He spent several days receiving and paying visits to more than 150 members of the government and Court. On April 23, La Vauguyon gave a reception for the diplomatic corps in honor of the United States and introduced Adams to all the ministers of the foreign Courts. In the following weeks, Adams was showered with invitations to attend banquets, public dinners, festivals, and fireworks displays in celebration of the recognition. Dutch artists, poets, and publishers commemorated the occasion with portraits, poems, publications, songs, and coins. The persistent Adams had become a hero to the Dutch.

The Treaty of Amity and Commerce

On April 23, the day after his audience with the Prince, the American envoy presented the proposal for a treaty of amity and commerce to the President of the States General. That same day the assembled dignitaries appointed a committee to discuss the matter of the treaty, and Adams was introduced to its members, to whom he presented a copy of a draft treaty drawn up on the basis of his instructions from Congress.

While the government deliberated over the treaty, Adams succeeded in obtaining the loan which his country needed so desperately. After 6 weeks of negotiation and bargaining, Adams signed an agreement on June 11 with a syndicate of three Amsterdam firms—the Willinks, the Van Staphorsts, and De la Lande & Fynje—for a loan of 5 million guilders payable in 15 years at 5% interest. Adams had hoped for a larger sum, but he was satisfied with the terms finally

negotiated. The Dutch loan agreement served as an important precedent and laid a permanent foundation for American credit abroad. This was the first of several such loans negotiated by the new American Government with the Netherlands during the next 10 years. They enabled the relatively weak government under the Articles of Confederation to survive the peace and to function until the establishment of a stronger government under the Constitution of 1787.

Once the first loan was secured, Adams focused on negotiations for the treaty of amity and commerce. He regretted the lengthy deliberations by the committee, the States General, the provinces, the cities, and the Admiralty. On June 15 Adams conferred with Van Bleiswyk and overcame some of his minor objections to the treaty. By the end of August, the States General had received reports on the treaty from the provinces, and Adams was invited to meet with the committee to discuss them. Adams' consultations with the committee were successful, and it completed its work early in September. On September 17 Adams went over the text of the treaty word by word with the Secretary of the States General. In a letter that day to Francis Dana, American Minister-designate to Russia, Adams wrote with an eye toward France as much as toward the Netherlands and Great Britain:

I shall sign the treaty of commerce next week. . . . The standard of the United States waves and flies at The Hague in triumph over Sir Joseph Yorke's insolence and British pride. When I go to heaven I shall look down over the battlements with pleasure upon the Stripes and Stars wantoning in the wind at The Hague. There is another triumph in the case, sweeter than that over our enemies. You know my meaning; it is the triumph of stubborn independence. Independence of friends and foes.[15]

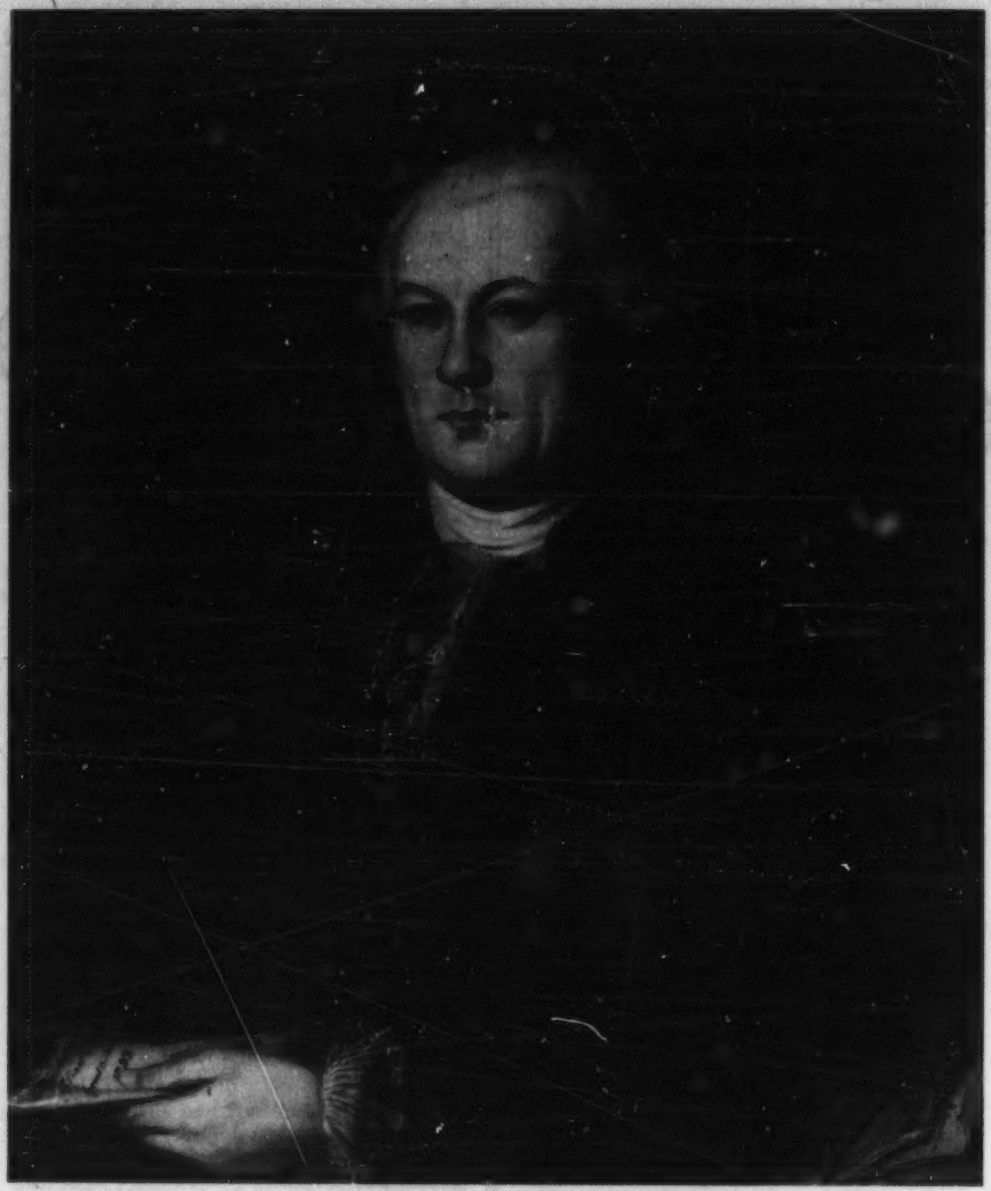
On October 8 Adams went to the State House at The Hague for the formal signing ceremony. He was received by the deputies of Holland and Zeeland and conducted into the Truce Chamber where he and George van Randwyck, Van Bleiswyk, and six other Dutch officials signed the treaty of amity and commerce.[16] A convention concerning recaptured vessels was also signed.

In a report to Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert Livingston, Adams explained the points of disagreement that had been settled and indicated that the treaty followed Congress' instructions as closely as possible. Adams had compromised on two provisions essential to the Dutch. The first pledged Americans to respect the Dutch colonies and their rights; the second insisted there be conformity to the laws of each country respecting public worship. "Upon the whole," wrote Adams, "I think the treaty is conformable to the principles of perfect reciprocity, and contains nothing that can possibly be hurtful to America, or offensive to our allies, or to any nation, except Great Britain, to whom it is, indeed, without a speedy peace a mortal blow."[17]

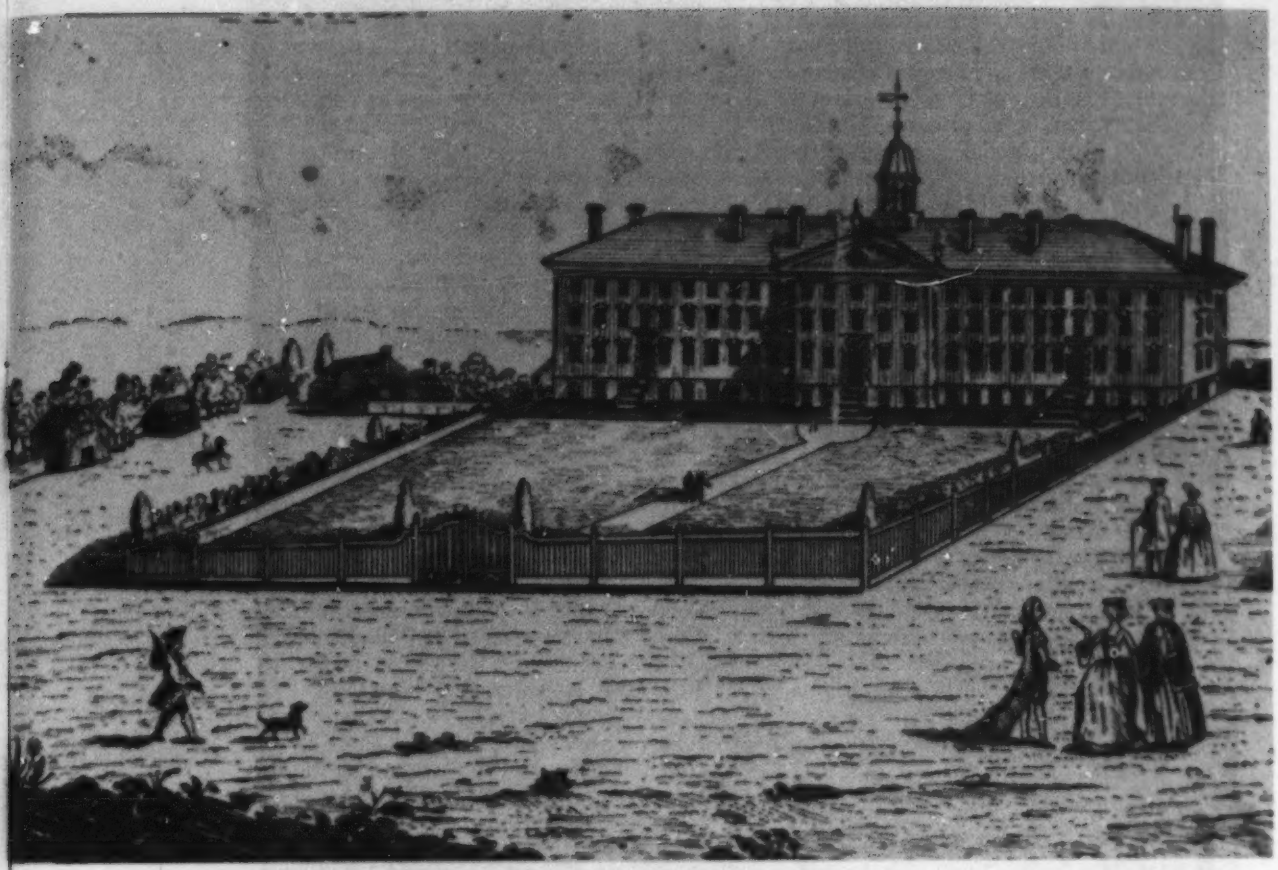
The treaty was ratified by the Netherlands on December 27, 1782, and by the Continental Congress on January 23, 1783. To Adams it represented the culmination of his efforts to win Dutch support and demonstrated that the United States, no longer dependent solely on France for support, had widened its freedom of maneuver.

Establishment of the American Legation

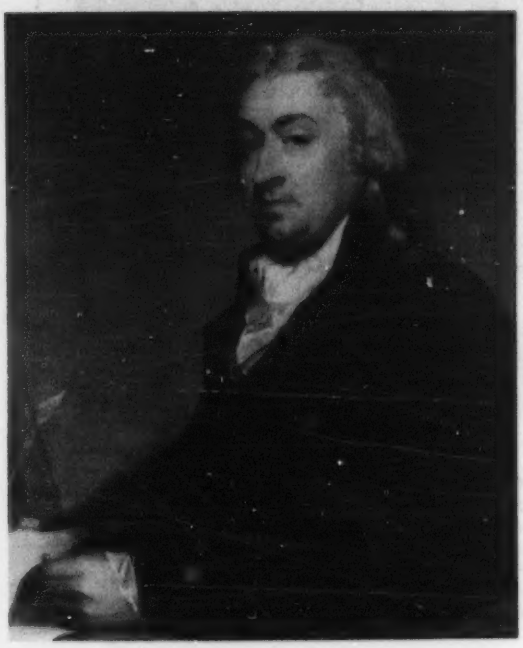
At the instruction of Congress, Adams left the Netherlands for Paris on October 17, 1782, to join the negotiations for a preliminary treaty of peace with Great Britain. After a brief trip to Holland in the summer of 1783, Adams returned to Paris where, on September 3, 1783, he and his colleagues signed the definitive treaty which ended America's Revolutionary War. He left the affairs of the United States in the hands of Dumas.



Elias Boudinot (1740–1821), a Philadelphia lawyer, who served as a member of the Continental Congress, 1777–1784, and as its President, 1782–1783. He later was a Congressman from New Jersey and the director of the U.S. Mint. In this portrait by Charles Willson Peale, Boudinot is shown holding the "Proclamation of Peace with Great Britain 1783." In the lower right corner are three documents entitled "Confederation," "Treaty with the United Netherlands," and "Treaty with Sweden." According to one art historian, both the painter and the subject considered these four documents "the crowning accomplishments of a distinguished public career." (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum)



Nassau Hall, Princeton, New Jersey, detail from a watercolor based on an 1800 engraving. The site of the presentation by Pieter Johan van Berckel of his credentials as the Netherlands first Minister to the United States on October 31, 1783. Congress had left Philadelphia on June 24, 1783, after the local authorities proved unwilling or unable to deal with army mutineers demonstrating in the city. Congress met in Princeton until November 3, 1783, when it adjourned and moved to Annapolis, Maryland. (Courtesy Princeton University Art Museum)



Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813), first Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was appointed by the Continental Congress October 20, 1781, and served until June 4, 1783. (Department of State Photo)

Although he held no commission because he was not an American citizen, Dumas continued to serve as chargé d'affaires in the Netherlands until 1790. At Adams' request, Dumas installed himself in the Hôtel des Etats-Unis at The Hague, the first legation building actually owned abroad by the United States. Adams had purchased this house in February 1782 because he believed it important for America to have its envoy ensconced in a proper residence at The Hague. As Adams had written at that time:

. . . it appears to me of indispensable importance that a minister should reside constantly here, vested with the same powers from Congress with which they have honored me; for which reason, having the offer of a large and elegant house in a fine situation on a noble spot of ground at The Hague at a very reasonable rate, I have . . . purchased it. . . .[18]

The First Netherlands Minister to the United States

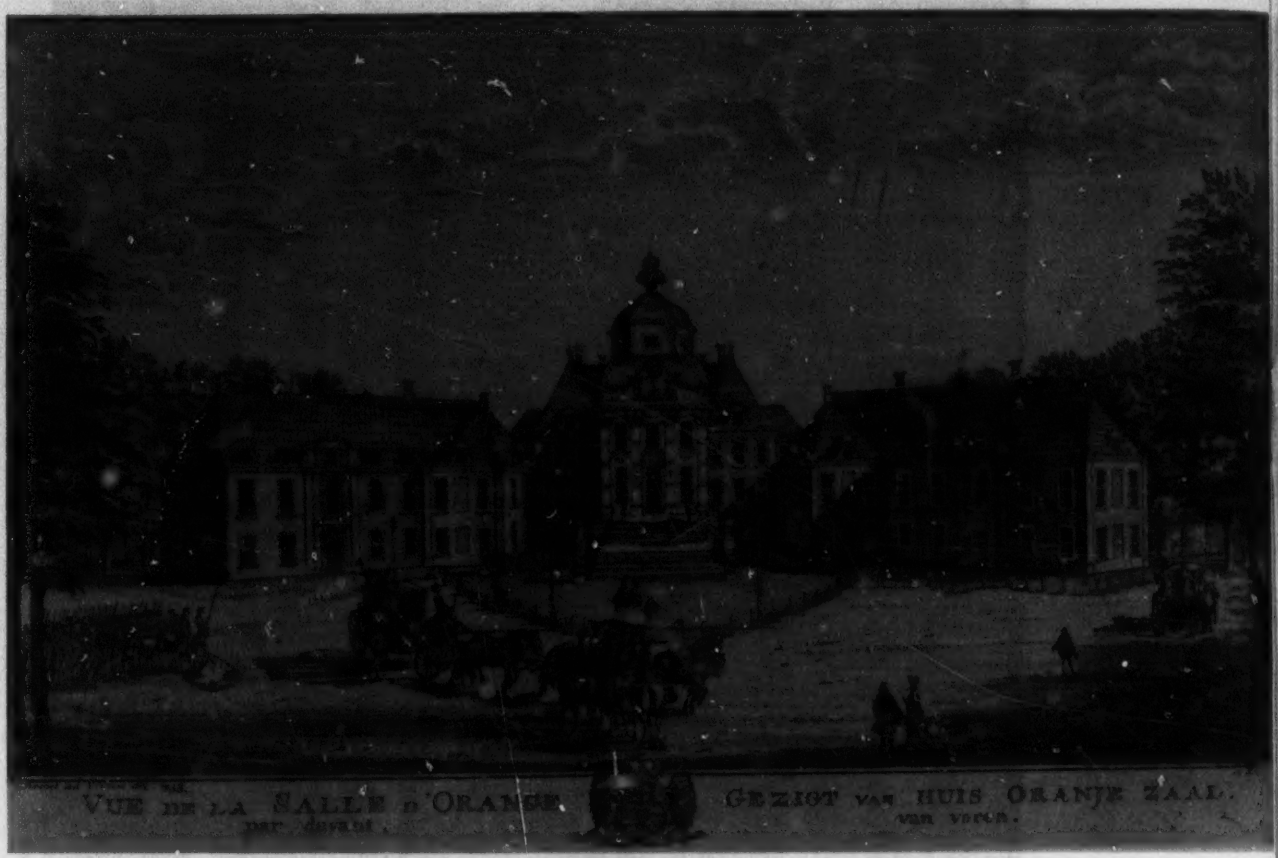
In the spring of 1783, the Dutch Government appointed Pieter Johan van Berckel, Mayor of Rotterdam and brother to the Pensionary of Amsterdam, as the first Netherlands Minister to the United States. Dumas reported that Van Berckel had been nominated by the Province of Holland and accepted by the States General. The new minister, he wrote, was "amiable, estimable, and patriotic." At Van Berckel's request, Dumas asked Secretary for Foreign Affairs Livingston to arrange for the rental of a "fine, large, and spacious house" in Philadelphia for the minister and his five children. He also requested that a new coach be made and that "six fine carriage horses" be bought for Van Berckel. Livingston replied that he rejoiced at Van Berckel's appointment and that "the patriotic character of his family" would insure him an agreeable reception.[19]

In their instructions to Van Berckel, the States General stressed the importance of the promotion and protection of Dutch commerce. They asked him to identify the principal interests of both countries and to safeguard the interests of Dutch merchants. He was also asked to inform his government about the constitutions of the Thirteen States, their relationship to each other and to the central government, and the land- and sea-power of the new nation as well as its external commitments.[20]

Van Berckel sailed from the Netherlands on June 23, 1783, in a ship of the line accompanied by three other vessels. After a stormy crossing, the new Dutch Minister arrived in Philadelphia. On October 30 Van Berckel journeyed to Princeton, New Jersey, where Congress—having left Philadelphia in June following public disturbances there—was convening. He had received an invitation from Elias Boudinot, the President of Congress, to present his credentials on October 31. Boudinot, who had also offered the hospitality of his Philadelphia home to the Dutch Minister upon his arrival, informed him that Congress was "greatly mortified, that our present circumstances, in a small country village, prevent us giving you a reception more agreeable to our wishes. . . ."[21] In describing the journey to Princeton and his reception, Van Berckel wrote:

In the evening when I was still a distance of six English miles away, I was met by an escort which had orders to accompany me. It consisted of an officer and eight light riders belonging to the bodyguard of General Washington. Upon my arrival in Princeton I was welcomed beside my coach by General Lincoln in his capacity as Secretary of the War Department, as well as by some other gentlemen on behalf of Congress, and led to the apartment which the Congress had provided for me and a few of my attendants in the home of the Pastor of Princeton. Thereupon I went immediately to pay a visit to the President of the Congress; and after having settled some matters with him relating to

Pieter Johan van Berckel (died 1800), Mayor of Rotterdam, was appointed the Netherlands' first Minister to the United States in May 1783. He presented his credentials to Congress on October 31, 1783, and served as minister until his recall by the States General in 1788. (Private Collection of J.W. Schulte Nordholt)



Huys ten Bosch, the Stadholder's residence on the outskirts of The Hague, where John Adams presented his credentials as American Minister to Prince Willem V on April 22, 1782. (Courtesy Gemeente-Archief, The Hague)

my audience the following day, I was informed toward noon on the second day by the Superintendent of Finances and by the Secretary of War, who had been jointly designated, in the absence of a Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to introduce me, that the Congress was assembled and prepared to receive me; whereupon I rode in my own coach to the House of the Assembly, and there, at the foot of the stairs, I was received by the above-mentioned introducers and led into the Assembly. After giving an address appropriate to the matter, a copy of which is herewith enclosed, I presented the Letter of your High Mightinesses, which was read by a Dutch interpreter; the President then read a reply in English . . . to the address I had given; with this the solemn ceremony was concluded and I was led out again and brought to my coach.[22]

The ceremony took place in Nassau Hall in Princeton where Congress held its meetings. This stately building was named after Prince Willem V's forefather, Willem III, Prince of Orange and Nassau, Stadholder of the Netherlands, who became King of England in 1688. In his address to Congress given in French,

Van Berckel expressed his joy and satisfaction at the opportunity to meet with such illustrious men "whom the present age admires." He declared:

While all Europe kept its eyes fixed on your exploits, their High Mightinesses could not refrain from very seriously interesting themselves therein, recollecting as they always did the dangers and difficulties to which their forefathers were subjected, before they could free themselves from the yoke in which they were enthralled. They knew better than any other the worth of independence, and they knew how to set a just value on the greatness of your designs. They applauded your generous enterprise, which was inspired by a love of your country, conducted with prudence and supported with heroic courage; and they rejoiced at the happy success which crowned your labours.[23]

Van Berckel's credentials concluded with the following statement:

We shall at all times rejoice in your increasing felicity; and we desire nothing more ardently than that we may maintain the strictest friendship and correspondence with you, for the good of the subjects and inhabitants of both countries.[24]

Boudinot then addressed the gathering. He welcomed the new minister, received his credentials, and accepted with pleasure "the honorable testimonials of confidence and esteem of their High Mightinesses, and their affectionate congratulations on the success of our efforts in the sacred cause of liberty." Boudinot said:

Governed by the same ardent love of freedom, and the same maxims of policy; cemented by a liberal system of commerce, and earnestly disposed to advance our mutual prosperity, by a reciprocity of good offices; we persuade ourselves that the most friendly and beneficial connexion between the two republics, will be preserved inviolate to the latest ages.[25]

After the ceremony, Boudinot gave a banquet for the new Dutch Minister. That same day, General George Washington visited Van Berckel and introduced him to a number of generals and prominent officers. The next day, the Dutch envoy received all the members of Congress and dined again with Boudinot. On November 2, Washington arranged an elegant dinner for the minister and many members of Congress and officers. In his report to the States General, Van Berckel wrote that "the character of your High Mightinesses has been treated with all distinction by the Congress and its members, as well as by George Washington."[26]

A Continuing Bond

In 1782 the United States and the Netherlands shared certain traits. Both were small and vulnerable, dependent on the sea, and devoted to free trade. Both were republics, committed to decentralized government and the rule of law, domestic and international. This common perspective facilitated Adams' efforts to persuade the Dutch to risk supporting the American Revolution. While the United States obtained from the Netherlands needed funds, a boost in morale, and enhanced prestige, Dutch expectations for an expansion of trade with the United States were not fulfilled. In fact, the United States soon became a commercial rival, not a customer. And during the 1780s and 1790s the example of the American Revolution was repeatedly invoked in various forms by different factions in the political debates that occurred in the Dutch Republic.

Through the years relations between the two countries have matured and the bonds between them have been strengthened. Grateful generations of Americans have viewed the Dutch as kindred spirits with the same fierce love of independence as their own Founding Fathers. As John Adams remarked to his wife in 1782:

I love the People where I am. They have Faults but they have deep Wisdom and great Virtues—and they love America and will be her everlasting Friend, I think.[27]

Endnotes

1 In addition to various biographies of John Adams and monographs on the diplomacy of the American Revolution, several specialized works treat the subject of the establishment of Dutch-American relations: Friedrich Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1911); Lyman H. Butterfield, "John Adams and the Beginnings of Netherlands-American Friendship, 1780-1788," in *Butterfield in Holland: A Record of L.H. Butterfield's Pursuit of the Adamses Abroad in 1959* (Cambridge, Mass: privately printed, 1961) which was of particular use in preparing this paper; J.W. Schulte Nordholt, "The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic," in *The Impact of the American Revolution Abroad* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1976); James H. Hutson, *John Adams and the Diplomacy of the American Revolution* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980); and J.W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Dutch Republic and American Independence* (to be published by the University of North Carolina Press in 1982).

2 Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, circa August 15, 1782; Lyman H. Butterfield, *et al.*, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), vol. IV, p. 361.

3 Edler, *The Dutch Republic and the American Revolution*, p. 232.

4 Adams to the *Boston Patriot*, June 23, 1809; *Correspondence of the Late President Adams* (Boston, 1809), pp. 102–103.

5 Letter to Abigail Adams, September 4, 1780; Butterfield, *Adams Family Correspondence*, vol. II, pp. 286–287.

6 Adams to the President of Congress, November 16, 1780; Charles Francis Adams, ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1852), vol. VII, p. 329.

7 Adams to the President of Congress, December 31, 1780; *ibid.*, pp. 348–349.

8 Adams to the President of Congress, October 14, 1780; Francis Wharton, ed., *The Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), vol. IV, pp. 97–98.

9 Quoted in J.W. Schulte Nordholt, "John Adams and the Dutch Republic," in *The Dutch Republic in the Days of John Adams* (The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1976), p. 11.

10 Quoted in J.W. Schulte Nordholt, "The Impact of the American Revolution on the Dutch Republic," in *The Impact of the American Revolution Abroad*, p. 46.

11 Memorial to the States General, April 19, 1781; Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. IV, pp. 370–376.

12 Adams to Secretary for Foreign Affairs Robert R. Livingston, April 19, 1782; *ibid.*, vol. V, p. 319.

13 Adams to Livingston, April 22, 1782; *ibid.*, pp. 319–320.

14 Quoted by Adams in a letter to Edmund Jenings, April 28, 1782; Massachusetts Historical Society, The Adams Papers, Microfilm Reel 356.

15 Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. V, pp. 732–733.

16 For the text of the treaty, see Charles I. Bevans, ed., *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776–1949* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1972), vol. 10, pp. 6–18.

17 Adams to the President of Congress, October 8, 1782; Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. V, pp. 803–805.

18 Adams to Livingston, February 27, 1782; *ibid.*, pp. 206–207.

19 Dumas to Livingston, March 4, 5, and 20, 1783; National Archives, Papers of the Continental Congress (Record Group 360), Microfilm Reel 121; Livingston to Dumas, undated but circa April 1783; Wharton, *Revolutionary Diplomatic Correspondence*, vol. VI, pp. 384–385.

20 Secret Resolution of the States General with instructions for Van Berckel, May 27, 1783; The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief Staten-Generaal, invent. nr. 4773.

21 Boudinot to Van Berckel, October 25, 1783; U.S. Department of State, *The Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States of America from the Signing of the Definitive Treaty of Peace, 10th September, 1783, to the Adoption of the Constitution, March 4, 1789* (Washington: Francis Preston Blair, 1833), vol. VI, pp. 423–424.

22 Van Berckel to the States General, November 4, 1783; The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief Staten-Generaal, invent. nr. 7461.

23 Worthington Chauncey Ford, *et al.*, eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), vol. XXV, pp. 780–783.

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 783–785.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 785–786.

26 Van Berckel to the States General, November 4, 1783; The Hague, Algemeen Rijksarchief, Archief Staten-Generaal, invent. nr. 7461.

27 Letter circa August 15, 1782; Butterfield, *Adams Family Correspondence* vol. IV, p. 361.

dag van de onderteekening.

Ten oirkonde dezes hebben Wy de gedeputeerden en Plenipotentiarissen van de Heeren Staten Generaal der Verenigde Nederlanden en Minister Plenipotentiaris der Vereenigde Staten van America, uit kragte van onze respective Authoriteiten en plein pouvoir dezes onderteekent, en met Onze gewoone Cachetten bekragtigt. In den Hage den Agsten Octobr, Een duysent Seven honderd tagtig.

the Signatures.

In Faith of which, We the Deputies and Plenipotentiaries of the Lords the States General of the United Netherlands, and the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, in virtue of our respective Authorities and full Powers, have signed the present Treaty and appposed thereto the Seals of our Arms.

Done at the Hague the Eight of October, One Thousand Seven Hundred Eighty Two.

Geo: van Randwijck

John Adams

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Bureau of Public Affairs
April 1982

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Cover

Allegory on the Recognition of the United States by the Netherlands. A woman on a pedestal representing America, with the coats-of-arms of the United States, France, and Amsterdam, is trampling upon the fallen figure of England, while to the right the King of France pushes down the British crown. On the left the Mayor of Amsterdam offers to America the 1778 secret treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which was a draft agreement between the United Provinces and the United States and was called the Preparatory Plan. The translation of the caption is as follows: "America tramples down angry Albion, while the British crown is crushed by the Bourbon, and America, in the person of Adams, is recognized by the Netherlands after the example of the citizens of Amsterdam." (Private Collection of J.W. Schulte Nordholt)

Inside Front and Back Covers

First and last pages of U.S.-Netherlands Treaty of Amity and Commerce, signed at The Hague, October 8, 1782. (National Archives Photos)